

# ANNUAL REPORT

TO

THE MEMBERS OF

SHORT HEATH

Urban District Council

BY

JOHN T. HARTILL,

*L.R.C.P.L., M.R.C.S., Eng., J.P.,*

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

January 25th, 1897.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30085834>

# ANNUAL REPORT

TO

THE MEMBERS OF

SHORT HEATH

Urban District Council

BY

JOHN T. HARTILL,

*L.R.C.P.L., M.R.C.S., Eng., J.P.,*

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

January 25th, 1897.



# Medical Officer's Annual Report, 1896.

---

The parish or township of Short Heath was created towards the end of 1895 by the addition to the District within the parish of Willenhall which was locally governed by the Short Heath Urban District Council, of a tract of territory on the Northern side of New Invention which had hitherto been locally governed by the Wednesfield District Council.

In my last annual report I estimated the population at the end of 1895 to be 3373 living on 765 acres of land. After consideration of the house to house inspection made between June and November 1896 by your Sanitary Inspector I am of opinion that the population at Midsummer 1896 may be estimated at 3373, and my calculations have been based upon that estimate, which is slightly more than the population as enumerated by the Inspector and somewhat less than if to a total of 3373 at Christmas 1895 the natural increment had been added. It rarely happens that Sanitary Inspectors, whose visits extend over months and who are known to be on the look-out for cases of overcrowding, succeed in getting a complete list of the inhabitants; whilst on the other hand there is always a migration going on from less to more prosperous places and to places where the supply of houses exceeds the demand for them. I am also officially informed that the acreage of the new parish has been ascertained to be 1063.

One hundred and thirty six children were born during the year, and forty six persons died. The birth-rate was therefore 40·3 and the death-rate 13·6 per thousand. The death-rate in the ten preceding years was 16·5. The deaths from preventable causes, including Diarrhœa, were at the rate of 1·4 per thousand, as compared with 2·4 in the ten previous years. The deaths of infants under a year old per 1000 births registered were 102·9. The chief



features of interest in these figures are, that the birth-rate was high, the death-rate from general causes decidedly low, the death-rate from preventable causes below the average in the County, the infantile death-rate decidedly favourable, and that whilst the general death-rate since 1871 was only lower in 1885, 1886 and 1895 that from preventable diseases was only lower in 1885, 1888 and 1891.

The number of houses in the parish is 674, of which only four were void, and of those four, one is unfit for habitation. The average number living in each house is therefore, five.

Of Zymotic diseases there came to my knowledge 13 cases of Scarlet Fever, 3 of Diphtheria, 2 of Typhoid Fever, 2 of Erysipelas, 6 of Whooping Cough, 48 of Measles, 2 of Diarrhœa and 28 of Mumps. Of these, 5 were fatal. The District was singularly free from Diarrhœa, both infantile and adult. Measles chiefly affected the Scholars at Holy Trinity Schools at the early part of the year; whilst Mumps prevailed mostly among those attending the Board Schools, towards the end of the year. With regard to five of the cases of Scarlet Fever, 3 of Diphtheria and one of Typhoid Fever in Sneyd Lane I made an investigation to the best of my ability; but, as the Council has been unwilling to adopt the Notification Act and Medical men are less willing than they used to be to give me by courtesy the desired information, because the Council has now the power to acquire that information for its Officers by a small payment, I received no intimation concerning them until all had died or recovered. Three houses were infected, all the cases appear to have had a red rash over the entire body early in the complaint, all but one had peeling of the skin and that one died after a few days illness. Two of the deaths were registered as due to Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria, and though I suppose it is not impossible for Diphtheria to seize a person suffering from Scarlet Fever whose throat from that cause was in a bad condition, yet I think it would be almost impossible to be sure that Diphtheria was a contributory cause of death unless a bacteriological examination were made by an expert. In one of the cases in which death was registered as due to Diphtheria it is

said there was also Inflammation of the Lungs, but the illness clearly started with a red rash; whilst the case reported to be Typhoid Fever was followed by skin peeling, Bright's disease and Dropsy. The upshot of these remarks is that there is much to cause me to believe all the cases were primarily Scarlet Fever, but if there were any Diphtheritic or Typhoid element in them, the only possible cause I can find is that there is a dead-end to the water mains there and that shortly before these children were taken ill the tap-water was observed to be muddy, a condition which was soon remedied by the flushing of the mains. I therefore suggest that the Water Authorities should be requested to frequently flush the mains at this point. With regard to the other case of Typhoid Fever at Short Heath Village the child which was only three years old had for some long time been a chronic invalid with abdominal troubles. This would accentuate the difficulty always experienced in diagnosing the certain presence of the Typhoid infection in young children. At any rate, the child had not so far as could be ascertained been exposed to the risk of contracting the complaint from a pre-existing case; the premises were in excellent condition and no other case was contracted from it. It was not thought necessary to close any of the Schools in consequence of infectious disease, but in every reported case advice was given calculated to limit the spread of contagious ailments.

The sickness-rate was well below the average, especially in the first quarter of the year when the weather was abnormally mild.

The supply of water from the Corporation mains was much more abundant than hitherto, especially after the new mains from Wolverhampton to Willenhall were laid. Of the 674 houses, 609 are supplied from the water mains, 61 from Wells, 3 from Springs and 1 from a Brook. I advise the Council to procure samples of the four last named for analysis.

Before your Inspector commenced his house to house inspection I advised him to "direct special attention everywhere to the condition of the privies, ashpits, ditches and pigsties" and in all cases that he had the chance "to get the ashpits ventilated and made

water-tight above and below" and to secure as far as possible "an admixture of ashes with privy contents in receptacles as small as practicable." Your Inspector reports that subject to the remarks on the sanitary conveniences made in previous years he found them in good order, and, having regard to the open condition of the District, not the cause of any serious nuisance.

I inspected 47 workshops, with the result that 21 requests to limewash them were made and three nuisances were discovered. Your Inspector reports that these 21 requests to limewash, together with two carried forward from the preceding year have been complied with and that each of the nuisances has been abated without the necessity of any Formal Order from the Council. I am therefore able to report that the inspections made in 1895 and 1896 have resulted in every workshop being limewashed within fourteen months from the date on which it was previously done. There were twelve cases in which it was thought desirable to ascertain whether there was any overcrowding of workmen, and your Clerk having given me the cubic contents I am glad to say that in all cases the air-space was well above statutory requirements.

Table C, appended hereto, will give the Council some idea of the work done by your Inspector under my guidance.

I have not heard that the Council has yet caused the Slaughter Houses to be registered in accordance with its bye-laws. The objectionable features referred to in my April report at Mr. Wilcox's slaughter-house have to a large extent been removed by the building of a store-room for flour and other articles separate from it.

There is still need that the Council should consider the question of sewage disposal if it desires to avoid penalties.

The roads are in a shocking state. They require a large outlay if they are to be brought into anything approaching sanitary order. Some years ago I threw out the suggestion that the County Council might be asked to consider whether some of the Short Heath roads might not be considered to be main roads and as such kept in order at the County's expense. I understand some negotiations have taken place intended to bring about so desirable a result, but that those negotiations have been limited to



a small portion of the roads. What is a main road? is the road from Lichfield and Bloxwich through New Invention to Wednesfield and Wolverhampton and embracing a considerable part of your district along which Her Majesty's Artillery and Cavalry pass en route from one Military station to another *not* a main road? is the road from Bloxwich through the front or Back Lane of Short Heath Village to Willenhall, Darlaston and Wednesbury *not* a main road? are the roads from Cannock and Essington to Lane Head, and from Essington through Luncton to the centre of Willenhall and Bilston *not* main roads, along which there is an immense traffic from the Essington Collieries? it seems to me they ought all to be regarded as main roads, for no one who knows the District can contend that the traffic along these roads on purely Short Heath business would be at all large, whilst everyone is aware that the actual traffic is heavy.

There is a case of overcrowding at Mr. Jonah Cliff's, Cross Street, where 11 persons sleep in two bedrooms. Whilst on the subject of overcrowding I should like to say I don't in the least doubt that if some one could be induced to put up 50 houses this year, tenants would soon be found for them.

I referred last year to the need for the introduction of gas into the district. The lock and key trade of the district is rapidly passing away, in consequence to some extent of an inability to compete with those who have put down Gas Engines in Willenhall. Unless Short Heath can compete with its neighbours on terms of equality, one of two things must happen, the artisan of Short Heath must find employment in Willenhall or Bloxwich or if he leave Short Heath there will be an increased proportion of Miners in Short Heath engaged at the Essington Collieries. Changes of this kind have already begun and the general effect on the District if they increase will be that the artisan who for generations past has been conservative in his habits and rarely disposed to change the locality of his home, will give way to a new and more migratory population.

My views on the necessity of Isolation Hospitals are well known to the Council. Conferences have been held between a Committee of the County Council and the various local Authorities

on the subject, at which representatives of your Council were present, but no definite conclusions have yet been arrived at.

Water, apparently clean, wells up from beneath Mr. Shelton's building in Sneyd Lane on to Mr. Joseph Whitehouse's property causing the back premises to be constantly damp and unwholesome. I advise suitable drainage pipes to be put down to carry off the water and observations to be made from time to time to ascertain whether there is any leakage from drains on Mr. Shelton's property which is finding its way beneath that property.

As there were 136 births last year and 130 the year before, and only 43 children were successfully vaccinated in 1896 the Vaccination Acts do not appear to be sufficiently enforced. The Report of the Royal Commission on Vaccination is thoroughly favourable to the views I have always expressed that both Vaccination and Revaccination are powerful factors in reducing the prevalence of and mortality from Small Pox. I therefore advise the Council to petition the Guardians to fulfil what is beyond all doubt their statutory duty, quite irrespective of any opinions they may personally hold, namely to see that the Vaccination Laws are complied with.

The Tables required by the Local Government Board and County Council are appended hereto.

In conclusion let me once again advise the Council to adopt the Notification Act, ere it is made compulsory by a greater power; and, whilst considering in what way they can benefit their friends and neighbours let them bear in mind that sanitation in the last fifty years has increased the mean duration of life in England "nearly four years for males and more than five years for females," a fact which ought to encourage still greater efforts and which should increase the trust of the public in the Guardians of the public health and conciliate those who are constantly opposed to public expenditure mainly because they fail to understand that it is for the public good.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

**JOHN T. HARTILL,**

Willenhall, January 25th, 1897.

M.O.H.

## TABLE A.

*Shewing the Deaths classified according to Diseases and Ages, &c.*

At all Ages.	Under One Year.	One and under Five.	Five and under 15	Fifteen and under 25.	Twenty-five and under 65.	Sixty-five and upwards.
46	14	9	2	1	14	6

## DEATHS.

	Under 5.	Over 5.
From Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria—both causes .. .. .	2	
„ Diphtheria .. .. .	1	
„ Typhoid Fever .. .. .	1	
„ Diarrhœa .. .. .	1	
„ Bronchitis, Pneumonia and Pleurisy	7	8
„ Heart Disease .. .. .		1
„ Injuries .. .. .		2
„ Small Pox, Croup, Whooping Cough, Influenza, Typhus and Puerperal Fevers, Cholera, Erysipelas, Ague, Measles, Rheumatic Fever and Consumption .. .. .	0	0
„ All other Diseases .. .. .	11	12
Total	23	23

Deaths ; Males 24 } Total 46 ; equal to a Death-rate of 13·6  
 „ ; Females 22 } per thousand.

Births ; Males 72 } Total 136 ; equal to a Birth-rate of 40·3  
 „ ; Females 64 } per thousand.

Population Census 1891 .. 2514.  
 „ Midsummer 1896 .. 3373.

Deaths in Union House, Wolverhampton, from the District 0.

Area in Acres .. .. 1063.



## TABLE B.

*Shewing New Cases of Infectious Disease and Deaths therefrom, &c.*

	New Cases.		Deaths.		Infected Houses.
	Under 5.	Over 5.	Under 5.	Over 5.	
Scarlet Fever ..	5	8	2	0	8
Diphtheria ..	3		1*		2
Typhoid Fever .	2		1		2
Whooping Cough	4	2			3
Measles .. ..	23	25			30
Diarrhœa ..	1	1	1		2
Erysipelas ..		2			2
Mumps . . .	4	24			23

The Notification of Infectious Diseases is not  
Compulsory.

Death-rate from preventable causes including Diarrhœa,  
1·4 per thousand.

\* In two other cases Diphtheria was said to be with Scarlet Fever the cause of death. In this table the deaths are included under the heading of Scarlet Fever.



## TABLE C.

## Summary of Work by Inspector of Nuisances.

---

Houses Inspected	...	...	...	...	...	674
Schools	,,	...	...	...	...	3
Dairies	,,	thrice	...	...	...	8
Cowsheds	,,	thrice	...	...	...	8
Bakehouse	,,	thrice	...	...	...	1
Slaughterhouses	,,	thrice	...	...	...	3
Ashpits, privies, and pigsties inspected	...	...	...	...	all	
Informal Notice to abate foul condition of dwelling house	..	...	...	}	1	
Abatement after Notice	...	...	...		1	
Informal Notice that Dwelling House was unfit for habitation	..	...	...	}	1	
House closed after notice	...	...	...		1	
Informal Notices to abate Nuisances from ashpits, privies and deposits of manure	...	...	...	}	4	
Nuisances abated after notice	...	...	...		4	
Informal Notices of defective house drainage	...	...	...		4	
Abatements after Notice	...	..	....		4	
Informal Notice to abate Nuisance from pigstye	...	...	...		1	
Nuisance abated after Notice	...	...	...		1	
Informal Notices to limewash workshops and to abate Nuisances in or near workshops				}	24	
Notices complied with including two served at end of preceding year				}	26	
Formal Notices by Authority	...	...	...		0	





